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ABSTRACT

The involvement of teaching and administrative staff in a decision making procedure that focuses upon their perceived needs has been recognized as central to the success of a staff development program. This concept was the premise upon which the University of Alabama/Livingston Teacher In-Service Center conducted a needs assessment and planned its activities for 1986-87. The Center is one of eleven in the state charged with providing public school personnel with rigorous inservice training in identified critical needs areas. Prior to initiation of Center activities, several needs assessments were conducted to ascertain perceived training needs and priorities of personnel. Through two training cycles, these needs assessments were updated annually using data gathered from individual workshop evaluations. Because these data were generated exclusively by workshop participants, determining the needs of personnel who had not yet been served by the Center was considered important. In order to accomplish this, a region-wide population survey of personnel in 12 school systems was conducted. This paper describes procedures used in conducting the survey, results obtained, and application of the results in planning inservice workshop offerings. The survey instrument is appended. (JD)

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TEACHER IN-SERVICE EDUCATION: A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

by

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The belief that growth and development of staff have a positive effect on the learning environment is an underlying concept of 19 school districts nationwide that were recently cited for exemplary staff development programs ("Improving Instruction: Exemplary Staff Development Programs," 1986). Among the common threads that run throughout descriptions of these 19 programs are the notions that: (a) persons charged with implementing change in the classroom should have an active voice in planning staff development programs that lead to change; (b) professionals should be allowed to make relevant choices about their own professional growth, and that this choice begins with their expressed needs and requests; and (c) collaborative partnerships among school district personnel and post-secondary educational institutions provide optimal results in terms of needs assessments, participation, delivery systems, and satisfaction with programs.

Central to the success of a staff development program, then, is the involvement of teaching and administrative staff in a decision-making procedure that focuses on their perceived needs. This concept was the premise upon which the University of Alabama/Livingston Teacher In-Service Center conducted a needs assessment and planned its activities for 1986-87. A product of the Alabama Education Reform Act of 1984, the UA/Livingston Center is one of 11 centers in the state charged with providing public school personnel with rigorous in-service training in six

identified critical needs area: mathematics, science, computer education, language arts/English, special education, and administration. The Center's service region includes 12 school systems which are located in nine counties of west central Alabama and which collectively employ 2,600 teachers and administrators.

Prior to initiation of Center activities, several needs assessments were conducted to ascertain perceived training needs and priorities of personnel in the region (McLean, Turner & Hebbler, 1985). Through two training cycles, these needs assessments were updated annually using data gathered from individual workshop evaluations. Because these data were generated exclusively by workshop participants, determining the needs of personnel who had not yet been served by the Center was considered important. (McLean, Turner, & Moon, 1986). In order to accomplish this, a region-wide population survey of personnel in the 12 school systems was conducted. The purpose of this paper is to describe procedures used in conducting the survey, results obtained, and application of the results in planning in-service workshop offerings.

Method

Sources of Information

Three major sources of information were used in the survey. They were: (a) input from The University of Alabama College of Education area heads in Administration,

Curriculum and Instruction, Special Education, and from the Dean and faculty of the College of Education at Livingston University; (b) superintendents and central office professional staff from each school system in the region; and (c) a data base established from needs identified by workshop participants in the preceding year combined with those identified in the current survey.

Development of the Survey Form

As the initial step in developing the survey form, the Project Coordinator interviewed independently each area head to obtain his evaluation of workshops conducted in the previous year. Information gathered related to their assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the activities, as well as recommendations for topics to be added, repeated, or deleted in the coming year. Concurrently, participant evaluations were reviewed to determine needs expressed by those attending the 1985-86 workshops. Finally, key persons in all 12 school systems were asked to generate suggestions and recommendations concerning specific needs for their respective systems. In each system, superintendents provided information regarding administrative workshops needed by superintendents, school board members, principals, and central office staff. Supervisors and curriculum specialists indicated needed topics for regular classroom teachers (all grade levels), and special education coordinators related needed areas of training for special education teachers.

Data obtained from the area heads (University of Alabama and Livingston University), the participant evaluations, and the local school systems were combined to determine common topics of interest. From this analysis, a list of potential workshop topics was generated and sent to University of Alabama area heads, Livingston University Teacher Center personnel, and local system key personnel for review, comment, and selection of priority topics. The 75 most frequently selected topics were identified for inclusion on the survey form (Appendix A).

The form was designed for optical scanning to facilitate data entry. The purpose of the survey and directions for completing the form were stated on the form. Information requested included identification of each respondent's school system, primary personnel assignment, and primary grade level assignment. Each respondent was asked to indicate which of the 75 workshops he/she would consider beneficial to professional development and which he/she would attend, if it were scheduled (Appendix A).

Data Collection

At least one representative from each system attended a meeting at The University of Alabama campus to receive guidelines for conducting the survey and to collect survey materials for his/her system. Instructions for completing the forms were given and routing procedures were outlined. Packets containing forms for all personnel were issued to

the representative from each system. (The number of forms for each system had been determined by contacting the system prior to the meeting.) Principals distributed the forms at faculty meetings and collected the completed forms for return by mail to the Teacher In-Service Center. Almost all schools responded within an agreed two-week period; all responded within four weeks.

Concurrent with collection of needs assessment data, a questionnaire was distributed to appropriate university faculty to poll interest and expertise in conducting workshops on the 75 potential topics. Faculty members were also asked for input on such workshop logistics as amount of time needed, optimum number of participants, etc. Consultant selection was based on matching responses to this poll with workshops selected for presentation.

Results

A total of 2,525 usable forms were returned. The vast majority of those responding to the survey identified their primary personnel assignment as regular classroom teacher (N = 1937, 76.7% of total). Almost half of all respondents (N = 1249, 49.5%) indicated their primary grade assignment as elementary school, with 357 (14.1%) from middle schools, and 776 (30.7%) from high schools.

Data Analyses

The data were summarized in several ways. Based on percentage of total responses, the 75 workshop topics were rank-ordered from most requested to least requested. For personnel assignment categories, total number of requests and percentages within category were computed for each topic (see Table 1).

Similar breakdowns were done for the six priority categories of workshops (science, mathematics, language arts, special education, computer education, and administration). In each category, the most requested topics were identified and linked to grade level assignment.

Summary reports of results for each school system were generated. These summaries indicated total number of responses from the system by personnel assignment and grade level assignments. The reports presented in rank order the most frequently requested workshops for each system. Ranks were derived by overall percentage of total requests from the individual system. Each system was sent a copy of its complete results, a one-page summary of these results, and a brief summary of needs assessment data for the 12-county area.

Copies of the analyses were presented to University of Alabama area heads and Livingston University Teacher Center personnel for feasibility review, particularly in terms of availability of faculty or consultants to serve as workshop

instructors, and availability of other resources necessary to conduct specific workshops.

Final selection of workshops was based on analyses of the needs assessment survey and the feasibility review. A total of 115 workshops were conducted in the spring and summer of 1987.

Discussion

The UA/Livingston Teacher In-Service Center is one of 11 regional centers designed to provide professional development services to public educators in Alabama. During three years of operation, the number of workshops has increased from 54 to 130. Attendance has increased in each successive year, from approximately 450 in the first year, to 1,800 in the second year, and more than 3,000 in the third year. Participant evaluation has been overwhelmingly positive, and feedback from the 12 school systems has been equally positive.

Although many factors contribute to the success of the Teacher Center program, a key component is the degree of collaboration between Teacher Center staff and school system personnel. This high level of involvement is typified in the needs assessment itself. At each stage of the process in assessing needs, the school systems are included. By using topic suggestions from participants in the preceding year's workshops and by soliciting ideas and feedback from

teacher and administrator representatives of each system, school district personnel are crucial in determining the topics that appear on the instrument itself. System representatives also serve as the vehicle through which the needs assessment is physically administered; this approach insures the opportunity for every educator in the 12 systems to have a voice in the specific programs offered. Upon receiving the results of the needs assessment for their system, school district personnel have the occasion to decide the particular workshops they would like hosted in their system. The process comes full circle when, while attending the workshops, participants are afforded the opportunity both to evaluate the workshops and to make suggestions for future workshop topics.

As with the 19 exemplary staff development programs cited in the introduction to this paper, the University of Alabama/Livingston Teacher In-Service Center is committed to involving teaching and administrative staff in a decision-making procedure that focuses on their perceived needs. We believe this commitment has its rewards; for us the reward is the number who attend the programs and their expressed level of satisfaction; for the participants, the reward is having available workshop opportunities to meet their professional growth needs.

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McLean, J.E., Turner, G.A., and Moon. S.B. (1986). Evaluation of The University of Alabama/Livingston University Teacher In-Service Center. University, Alabama: Evaluation and Assessment Laboratory.

Table 1

WORKSHOPS REQUESTED BY PERSONNEL CLASSIFICATION

Workshop Topic	Personnel Classification							
	Curriculum & Instruction		Admin.		Special Education		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Developing students' listening skills	696	35.9	15	12.4	60	21.8	806	31.9
The slow learner in regular classroom	690	35.6	21	17.4	42	15.3	789	31.2
Teaching thinking skills	631	32.6	17	14.0	52	18.9	731	29.0
Motivating reluctant readers	542	28.0	16	13.2	78	28.4	669	26.5
Teaching reading comprehension	518	26.7	12	9.9	67	24.4	612	24.2
Elementary science workshop	506	26.1	9	7.4	29	10.5	559	22.1
Developing comprehension ability	364	18.8	6	5.0	37	13.5	419	16.6
Teaching phonics	322	17.1	8	6.6	48	17.5	397	15.7
Developing questioning skills	313	16.2	13	10.7	18	6.5	360	14.3
Teaching creative writing	328	16.9	7	5.8	17	6.2	360	14.3
Teaching math effectively	306	15.8	1	0.8	34	12.4	352	13.9
Solving math word problems	318	16.4	2	1.7	15	5.5	346	13.7
Remediation strategies in math	255	13.2	10	8.3	58	21.1	331	13.1
Evaluating student performance	283	14.6	7	5.8	20	7.3	327	13.0

Table 1 Continued

Workshop Topic	Personnel Classification: Curriculum & Instruction		Admin.		Special Education		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reading in the content area	271	14.0	2	1.7	21	7.6	303	12.0
Developing math manipulatives	262	13.5	3	2.5	25	9.1	296	11.7
Introduction to Apple microcomputers	221	11.4	11	9.1	37	13.5	281	11.1
Key math concepts to be taught	222	11.5	5	4.1	23	8.	259	10.3
Computer gradebook management	221	11.4	6	5.0	17	6.2	250	9.9
Space science	227	11.7	4	3.3	10	3.6	248	9.8
Appleworks: Word processor	199	10.3	16	13.2	18	6.5	244	9.7
Computers to build basic math skills	177	9.2	6	5.0	24	8.7	218	8.6
Weather	192	9.9	2	1.7	8	2.9	208	8.2
Teaching fractions decimals, & percents	168	8.7	4	3.3	22	8.0	203	8.0
Teaching oral English	157	8.1	5	4.1	14	5.1	180	7.1
Printshop	139	7.2	11	9.1	15	5.5	174	6.9
Earth science	152	7.8	2	1.7	10	3.6	168	6.7
Writing about literature	142	7.3	5	4.1	8	2.9	160	6.3
Intro. to BASIC programming	112	5.8	10	8.3	22	8.0	152	6.0
Introduction to IBM computers	116	6.0	6	5.0	13	4.7	146	5.8

Table 1 Continued

Workshop Topic	Personnel Classification: Curriculum & Instruction		Admin.		Special Education		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SPE: Behavior problems--drugs, family, gangs	62	3.2	5	4.1	66	24.0	145	5.7
General math workshop	125	6.5	2	1.7	12	4.4	145	5.7
Life science	129	6.7	2	1.7	2	0.7	136	5.4
SPE: Developing classroom mgmt. approach	39	2.0	5	4.1	91	33.1	135	5.3
Appleworks: Data Base	96	5.0	14	11.6	9	3.3	127	5.0
SPE: The affective cirric. in classroom	20	1.0	3	2.5	97	35.3	121	4.8
Appleworks: Spreadsheet	92	4.7	12	9.9	7	2.5	121	4.8
Evaluation of computer software	95	4.9	6	5.0	6	2.2	119	4.7
IBM word processing	86	4.4	4	3.3	7	2.5	107	4.2
Admin: Helping teachers improve instruction	32	1.7	64	53.0	5	1.8	107	4.2
SPE: Matching learning styles & teaching techniques	18	0.9	2	1.7	86	31.3	106	4.2
SPE: Effective communication with parents	33	1.7	5	4.1	59	21.5	101	4.0
Admin: Assertive discipline	65	3.4	21	17.4	10	3.6	102	4.0

Table 1 Continued

Workshop Topic	Personnel Classification: Curriculum & Instruction N	Curriculum & Instruction %	Admin. N	Admin. %	Special Education N	Special Education %	Total Responses N	Total Responses %
SPE: Pre & vocational/ transitional progrm.	35	1.8	7	5.8	53	19.3	99	3.9
Admin: Helping teachers manage classrooms	44	2.3	42	34.7	3	1.1	98	3.9
Physical science	80	4.1	5	4.1	6	2.2	97	3.8
General software applications & evaluation	74	3.8	7	5.8	7	2.5	96	3.8
Newsroom	72	3.7	6	5.0	8	2.9	94	3.7
SPE: Mild lrning hndcp: cncrns & issues	18	0.9	3	2.5	66	24.0	88	3.5
SPE: Test interpret & utilz of info	22	1.1	5	4.1	56	20.4	84	3.3
Intro. to Apple: PILOT programming	61	3.1	5	4.1	7	2.5	78	3.1
Calculators to aid in math problem solving	68	3.5	2	1.7	4	1.5	78	3.1
Admin: Planning for curriculum	28	1.4	36	29.8	6	2.2	76	3.0
Computer test banks	60	3.1	6	5.0	1	0.4	72	2.9
Admin: Scheduling	26	1.3	32	26.4	2	0.7	71	2.8
Introduction to LOGO programming	57	2.9	1	0.8	8	2.9	69	2.7
Bankstreet Writer	46	2.4	10	8.3	5	1.8	66	2.6
Interdisciplinary approaches to math and science	59	3.0	2	1.7	3	1.1	65	2.6

Table 1 Continued

Workshop Topic	Personnel Classification						Total Responses	
	Curriculum & Instruction		Admin.		Special Education			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Admim: Planning, delegating, time management	28	1.4	29	24.0	3	1.1	64	2.5
Admin: Legal aspects of school administration	22	1.1	34	28.1	4	1.5	64	2.5
Algebra workshop	60	3.1	0	0.0	1	0.4	63	2.5
Admin: Liability of school personnel	30	1.5	23	19.0	5	1.8	62	2.4
SPE: Technical aspects of record keeping	9	0.5	4	3.3	46	16.7	60	2.4
Geometry workshop	54	2.8	1	0.8	1	0.4	58	2.3
SPE: P>L> 99-457 (Presch prgms/hndcp)	4	0.2	9	7.4	43	15.6	55	2.2
Def/pol/proced to identify SPE student	30	1.5	7	5.8	13	4.7	52	2.1
Admin: Conferencing skills	18	0.9	27	22.3	2	0.7	51	2.0
Chemistry	45	2.3	1	0.8	0	0.0	48	1.9
Admin: Legal & ethical concerns in eval.	12	0.6	25	20.7	2	0.7	42	1.7
Admin: Using volunteers/advisory boards	14	0.7	20	16.5	1	0.4	42	1.7
Physics	36	1.9	0	0.0	1	0.4	39	1.5
Admin: Planning for personnel	9	0.5	22	18.2	2	0.7	34	1.3
Admin: Workshop for new principals	20	1.0	7	5.8	3	1.1	31	1.2

Table 1 Continued

Workshop Topic	Personnel Classification							
	Curriculum & Instruction		Admin.		Special Education		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Admin: Fiscal management	9	0.5	13	10.7	0	0.0	25	1.0
Admin: Effective schools--Res. to practice	4	0.2	10	8.3	0	0.0	14	0.6
TOTALS	1937		121		275		2525	

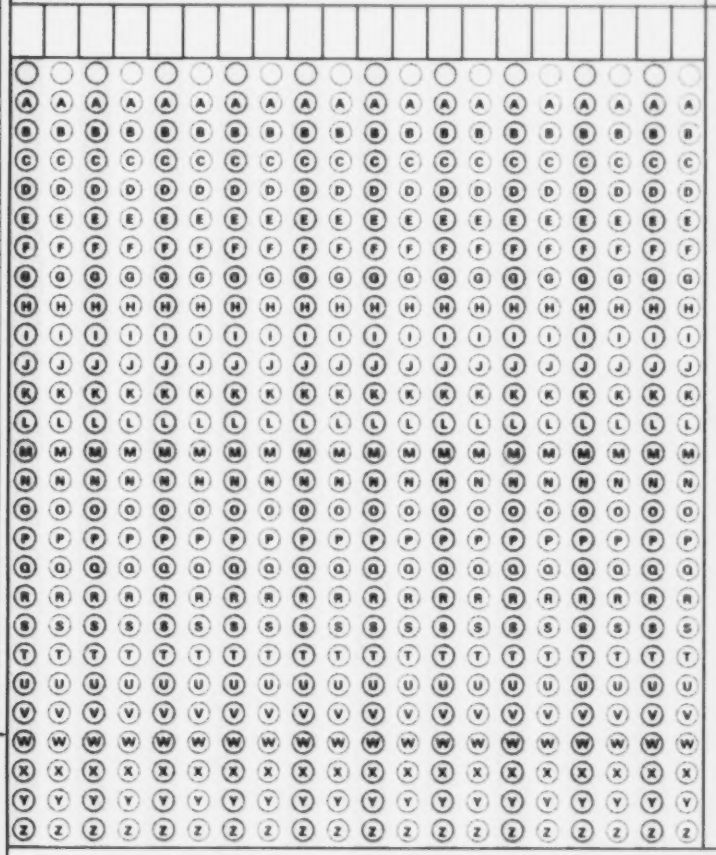
*The total may exceed the sum of the three categories as some respondents omitted their personnel classification.

**The Curriculum and Instruction category consisted of all classroom teacher responses. The administration category was derived by combining responses of superintendents, principals, and central office staff. The Special Education category was obtained by summing responses of all special education teachers and speech therapists.

APPENDIX A

Needs Assessment Survey Form

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA



NEEDS ASSESSMENT
UA/LIVINGSTON TEACHER IN-SERVICE CENTER

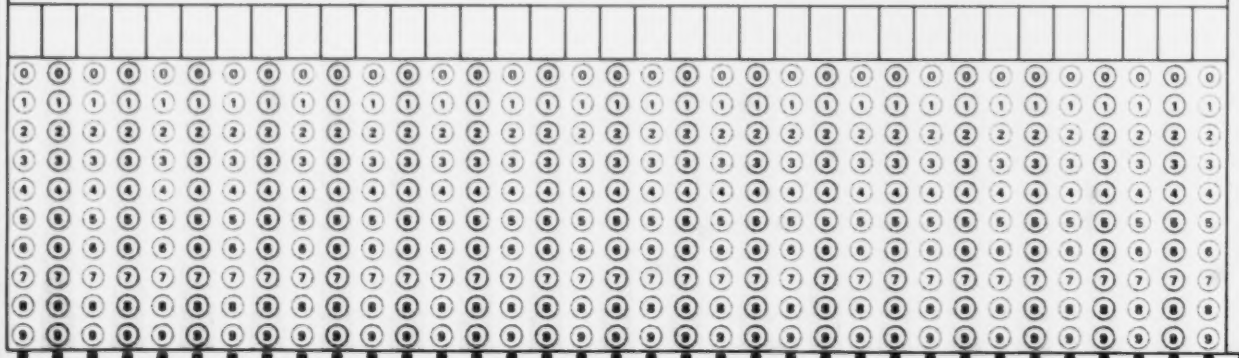
INTRODUCTION:

This needs assesament is designed to determine the professional development topics of interest to teachers and administrators. Based on your responses, the UA/Livingston Teacher In-Service Center will schedule its workshops for the spring and summer of this year.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Use a No. 2 pencil; mark only in the designated areas.
2. Fill in the 3 codes to the right as directed; then turn the sheet over.
3. You will see a list of 75 possible workshop topics. Darken the circle beside each workshop topic that you would be interested in attending. You will find the topics categorized in the following order:
   - Science
   - Mathematics
   - Language Arts
   - Special Education
   - Computer Education
   - Administration

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA



SCHOOL SYSTEM CODE

Darken the circle beside the school system in which you teach.

- Choctaw
- Demopolis
- Fayette
- Greene
- Hale
- Lamar
- Linden
- Marengo
- Pickens
- Sumter
- Tuscaloosa City
- Tuscaloosa County

PERSONNEL CODE

Darken the circle beside your primary personnel assignment; darken only one.

- Regular classroom teacher
- Principal
- Supervisor/Central office staff
- Superintendent
- SPE teacher - LD
- SPE teacher - EC
- SPE teacher - MR
- SPE teacher - GT
- SPE teacher - MLH
- SPE teacher - Orthop. Hndcp.
- SPE teacher - Visual. Impair.
- SPE teacher - Hearing Impair.
- SPE teacher - Other Impair.
- Speech therapist

GRADE LEVEL CODE

Darken the circle beside your primary grade level assignment; darken only one.

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School

19

20

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WORKSHOP TOPICS

- ○ Space science (solar systm, space exp)
- ○ Earth science (streams, deserts, glac)
- ○ Physical science
- ○ Life science (biology)
- ○ Chemistry
- ○ Physics
- ○ Weather
- ○ Elementary science workshop
- ○ Key math concepts to be taught
- ○ Remediation strategies in math
- ○ Solving math word problems
- ○ Computers to build basic math skills
- ○ Calculators to aid in math prblm slvng
- ○ Teaching fractions, decimals, & pcts
- ○ Developing math manipulatives
- ○ Geometry workshop
- ○ Algebra workshop
- ○ General math workshop
- ○ Teaching math effectively
- ○ Interdiscip. approaches to math & sci
- ○ Teaching phonics
- ○ Teaching reading comprehension
- ○ Writing about literature
- ○ Teaching oral English
- ○ Motivating reluctant readers
- ○ Developing comprehension ability
- ○ Teaching creative writing
- ○ Reading in the content area
- ○ Evaluating student performance
- ○ Teaching thinking skills
- ○ Developing questioning skills
- ○ Developing students' listening skills
- ○ The slow learner in regular classroom
- ○ Def/pol/proced to identify SPE student
- ○ SPE:Test interpret & utiliz of info
- ○ SPE:Effective communication w/ parents
- ○ SPE:The affective curric in classroom
- ○ SPE:Developing classroom mgmt approach
- ○ SPE:Technical aspects of recordkeeping
- ○ SPE:Pre & Vocational/transitional prgm
- ○ SPE:Behavior prblms-drug, fmly, gangs
- ○ SPE:Mild lrning hndcp-cncrns & issues
- ○ SPE:P.L.99-457 (presch prgms/hndcp)
- ○ SPE:Mtchng lrnng styles & tchng tech
- ○ Introduction to Apple microcomputers
- ○ Introduction to IBM microcomputers
- ○ General software applica & eval
- ○ Evaluation of computer software
- ○ Appleworks: Word Processor
- ○ IBM word processing
- ○ Appleworks: Data Base
- ○ Appleworks: Spreadsheet
- ○ Introduction to LOGO programming
- ○ Intro to BASIC programming
- ○ Intro to APPLE PILOT programming
- ○ Computer gradebook management
- ○ Printshop
- ○ Newsroom
- ○ Bankstreet Writer
- ○ Computer test banks
- ○ Admin:planning, delegating, time mgmt
- ○ Admin:conferencing skills
- ○ Admin:legal & ethical cnrns in eval
- ○ Admin:scheduling
- ○ Admin:fiscal management
- ○ Admin:assertive discipline
- ○ Admin:legal aspects of sch admin
- ○ Admin:effective schls-res to practice
- ○ Admin:workshop for new principals
- ○ Admin:helping tchrs improve instr
- ○ Admin:helping tchrs mnge classrooms
- ○ Admin:liability of school personnel
- ○ Admin:planning for personnel
- ○ Admin:planning for curriculum
- ○ Admin:using volunteers/advsry boards

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